

OCEAN CITY, MD – Congressman Steny Hoyer (D-Md.) spoke this morning to more than 1,000 Maryland fire service men and women at the 118th Annual Convention of the Maryland State Firemen's Association (MSFA) and Ladies Auxiliary in Ocean City. Hoyer also recognized incoming presidents of the MSFA and Ladies Auxiliary - Doyle Cox of Prince Frederick and Sandi Lutz of Glenn Dale – who both live in counties he represents in Congress.

“I'm honored to be here this morning. And I am particularly pleased to be able to participate in this the 118th Annual Convention of the Maryland State Firemen's Association and Ladies Auxiliary. I regret I won't be able to join with you tomorrow night for the Installation of your new officers, but I wanted to express my somewhat premature congratulations to Doyle Cox and Sandi Lutz on becoming the presidents of MSFA and the Ladies Auxiliary. Both live in counties I represent, and, like all of you, both have been extraordinary public servants in their communities and to the fire service.

“I want you to know how much I admire volunteer firefighters. Your training and your equipment may be cutting-edge, but the role you play in your communities is a timeless one. As long as we've lived together in communities, we've relied on the bravery of a few individuals who step up to protect their neighbors and their families. You choose that responsibility—no one forces it on you. You choose it because you love the communities you protect, and because you love the challenges and hard work of fighting fires. You do it without expecting any reward but our respect.

“It's easy at times to forget how much we owe to firefighters. But right now, as we speak, there are firefighters waiting on duty to protect us if the worst happens. And when we go to sleep tonight, some of them will still be waiting up: we get to sleep soundly, because they don't. When

that protection—that willingness to risk your lives—is so reliable, it's easy to take it for granted. But I hope you know this: no one in Congress takes it for granted—your sacrifices, your dedication, your sleepless nights. We honor it, and we will do our utmost to make your jobs easier and our communities safer.

“That's why the House recently reauthorized the essential FIRE and SAFER grant programs. The FIRE program authorizes \$1 billion per year for the latest equipment, the most up-to-date training, and fire prevention programs—and I worked to make sure that a fair share of those funds reach volunteer and combination departments like yours. And SAFER commits money each year to help volunteer departments recruit and train new members, because the firehouses in our communities should never have to sit empty.

“I am proud to have helped led the efforts to establish and adequately fund these programs because they mean safer communities—and because they express Congress's respect for your sacrifices. But I imagine that the respect that matters the most doesn't come from Washington, D.C. It comes from your neighbors, your friends, your children and loved ones, whenever they reflect on the work you do and the vital responsibility you take up.”

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